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# CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

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THE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, AND  
ITS DEVELOPMENT:

FIVE SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY, BOSTON,

IN JANUARY, FEBRUARY, AND MARCH, 1860,

And Printed at its Request.

I.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: . . . upon this rock I will build my church." — MATT. xvi. 16-18.

II.

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." — 1 COR. iii. 11.

III.

"Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." — 1 COR. iii. 12, 13.

IV.

"Ye believe in God: believe also in me." — JOHN xiv. 1.

V.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." — JOHN xiv. 16.

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BY EDWARD E. HALE.

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## FIVE SERMONS.

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### I.

"HE SAITH UNTO THEM, BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM? AND SIMON PETER ANSWERED AND SAID, THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, BLESSED ART THOU, SIMON BAR-JONA: . . . UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH."— Matt. xvi. 15–18.

OUR Saviour meant to build a church. The truth stated by Peter is the foundation of it. It is built upon this rock, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The declaration of Jesus bears this meaning only, unless we accept the forced interpretation of the Roman Catholics, and suppose that Simon Peter, the son of Jonas, is the corner-stone.

It is, indeed, a critical moment when Jesus speaks. The moment is fitted, above all others, for a clear and full declaration of the foundation of his church. The Galilean multitude has tried to make him king. He has withdrawn from their instances, and from the jealousy of Herod, out of Galilee to Cæsarea. The end of his ministry among his countrymen has come. He is about to leave them and Galilee to go to Jerusalem, and face his most bitter enemies. "In every respect, this was the natural and fitting time for the decisive, explicit communication of the one essential characteristic truth of his religion." At this moment, he asks Peter (the head of the apostles) what his view of that truth is. It proves that Peter understands it. He pronounces

it in a sharp epigram, for which the church has always thanked him. The church has really taken as its foundation the truth which he laid down. Well may we listen with reverent curiosity, well may we take to heart the words, when the Master speaks of the truth they convey as the corner-stone of his edifice. Peter's bold statement is, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was at that moment exiled from his country,\* is the Anointed,—the Christ ; that he is, indeed, the Son of the living God.

On that truth, Jesus meant to build his church, if, in his own words, we are to find his own meaning. I believe that we are. I believe we find his meaning there undisguised, and that we find the whole of it. I believe that history has made good his assertion, and has illustrated his meaning. His church exists. It has spread over this world, subdued this world, governed this world, re-created this world, as not the most intense prophecy of that day declared it would in so few centuries. It grows more powerful and more. It compels government to obey it, and literature and science. It heals the broken-hearted ; it opens the eyes of the blind ; and slowly, but surely, frees the captive. His kingdom comes, with the certainty of eternal power ; and his church is the agent by which it comes. Or, to take the figure of this text, the shelter of his church becomes wider and wider ; her roofs and spires and domes welcome more worshippers and more,—are the homes of the devotion of more hearts and more. Every land bears up her crosses where they may flash in the sun ; every breeze curls her incense as it rises to the living God. And of this whole great fabric, wide as the world as it extends, there is one foundation, and one only ; which is, that Jesus is the Christ, and that he is the Son of that living God.

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\* Cæsarea Philippi was, at this time, in the province of Trachonitis, in the jurisdiction of the Philip whose wife Herod of Galilee had taken. Matt. xiv. 13, 34; xv. 21; and xvi. 13,—all indicate, that, after the death of John, Jesus retired from Herod's jurisdiction, or from public appearance in it, until he was ready to go to Jerusalem (Matt. xix. 1).

History thus illustrates what he said ; and so illustrates it, that it is no longer a prophecy, but already a majestic truth of the past as well as of the future.

I believe that it is not only the truth, but that it is the whole truth. I believe, that is, that the church has no other foundation. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God ; and that is the complete statement of his being. His church stands on that statement only ; and it is enough for it to stand upon.

When, however, I say that Jesus here clearly expressed the whole truth, you know that I differ from many theologians. There has gradually been wrought into form a conviction, which was not always bold enough to find statement, that in Jesus' intercourse with men, even with his apostles, he was obliged to maintain a certain "reserve ;" that his statements to them, therefore, do not so much *reveal* the whole truth, as contain it under a veil ; and that even some centuries were needed before that veil could be wholly drawn away. Thus the Roman-Catholic Church, at the present time, has abandoned the effort to sustain its creed principally by the authority of Scripture. Granting more frankly, that, in Scripture, that creed exists, only so covered, that no man, even with the help of the Holy Spirit, can deduce it from Scripture alone, the Romanist teaches that it was the business of the church gradually to develop the creed, and, from time to time, to give it statement which it had not before. With reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, the Roman Church acknowledges that the Fathers of the first three hundred years seem to favor the Unitarian hypothesis. "The early creeds," says Bishop Newman of that church, its recent convert from the church of England, "make no mention in their letter of the Catholic doctrine at all. They make mention, indeed, of a Three : but that there is any mystery in the doctrine that the Three are One ; that they are co-equal, co-eternal, all increate, all omnipotent, all incomprehensible,—is not stated, and never could be gathered from

them.”\*—“The definition of our Lord’s proper divinity,” he says in another place, “was the work of the fourth century.”†

\* He continues: “Of course, we believe that they imply it, or rather intend it. God forbid we should do otherwise! But nothing in the mere letter of these documents leads to that belief. To give a deeper meaning to their letter, we must interpret them by the times which came after.

“Again: there is one, and only one, great doctrinal council in ante-Nicene times. It was held at Antioch, in the middle of the third century, on occasion of the incipient innovations of the Syrian heretical school. Now, the Fathers then assembled, for whatever reason, condemned, or at least withdrew, when it came into the dispute, the word ‘Homoousian,’ which was received at Nicæa as the special symbol of Catholicism against Arius.

“Again: the six great bishops and saints of the ante-Nicene Church were St. Irenæus, St. Hippolytus, St. Cyprian, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, and St. Methodius. Of these, St. Dionysius is accused by St. Basil of having sown the first seeds of Arianism; and St. Gregory is allowed, by the same learned Father, to have used language concerning our Lord which he only defends on the plea of an economical object in the writer. St. Hippolytus speaks as if he were ignorant of our Lord’s eternal Sonship; St. Methodius speaks incorrectly at least upon the incarnation; and St. Cyprian does not treat of theology at all. Such is the incompleteness of the extant teaching of these true saints, and, in their day, faithful witnesses of the eternal Son.

“Again: Athenagoras, St. Clement, Tertullian, and the two saints Dionysii, would appear to be the only writers whose language is at any time exact and systematic enough to remind us of the Athanasian Creed. If we limit our views to the teaching of the Fathers by what they expressly state, St. Ignatius may be considered as a Patripassian, St. Justin Ariapizes, and Hippolytus is a Photinian.

“Again: there are three great doctrinal writers of the ante-Nicene centuries,—Tertullian, Origen, and, we may add, Eusebius, though he lived some way into the fourth. Tertullian is heterodox on the doctrine of our Lord’s divinity, and, indeed, ultimately fell altogether into heresy or schism; Origen is, at the very least, suspected, and must be defended and explained rather than cited as a witness of orthodoxy; and Eusebius was an Arian.

“Moreover, it may be questioned whether any ante-Nicene Father distinctly affirms either the numerical unity or the co-equality of the three persons; except, perhaps, the heterodox Tertullian, and that chiefly in a work written after he had become a Montanist: yet to satisfy the anti-Roman use of “Quod semper quod ubique, quod ab omnibus” (“What has always been believed by everybody, everywhere;” the canon for testing belief, proposed by St. Vincentius of Liris), surely ought not to be left for these great articles of doctrine to the testimony of a later age.

“Further: Bishop Bull allows that ‘nearly all the ancient Catholics who preceded Arius have the appearance of being ignorant of the invisible and incomprehensible (*immensam*) nature of the Son, God; an article expressly contained in the Athanasian Creed, under the sanction of its anathema’” (Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, pp. 14, 15, American edition). It must be remembered, that Dr. Newman left an honorable position in the English Church, convinced by his own argument. He is now a bishop in the Roman Church. Bishop Bull, whom he quotes, was the English Bishop of Wells; and is one of the highest authorities in the theology of the English Church.

† *Ibid.*, p. 188.

So it was not till the fifth century that the latent doctrine of the worship of the Virgin Mary so far relieved itself from its hiding-place as to get statement in words;\* that is, it cannot be found earlier in Scripture, or other authoritative statements of the church. In the same way, the doctrine, that Mary mother was born free from original sin, did not get authoritative statement at the hands of that church till the 8th of December, 1854, within your memory and mine. In like manner, we may expect that church to go on, till it dies, developing and defining other doctrines to which it has not yet attained.

Protestantism began with such a protest against this claim of Rome, as for a time threw Protestantism into a blind idolatry of the letter of the Scripture. From that idolatry, however, Protestantism has now so far receded, that, especially where the defence of a favorite creed requires, some of the strictest Protestants now give in their adhesion to the same theory,—the necessity of a statement more perfect than that of the Gospels. While they still claim that the Gospels contain all truth, they hold that they so contain it that the men of their time did not wholly understand it. Thus are they relieved wholly from the necessity of following the first Fathers into any of their latitudinarianism, into any of their Judaism, into any of their Platonism, or into ways which might lead into Romanism. For instance: the most popular Orthodox German critic of our day says of this same doctrine of the Trinity, “In Christ’s identical words, the dogma of the Trinity is presented in an entirely undeveloped form, and the unfolding of the mystery is committed to the *scientific activity of the church.*”† I understand this to be the view of one who will interest you much more than even the leader

\* “The recognition of the place which St. Mary holds in the economy of grace was reserved for the fifth century” (*Ibid.*, p. 188). It is worth notice, that it seems to be *Athanasius* who first suggested worship to her. The passage is in the essay *De Sanctissimâ Deiparâ*, or “The Most Sacred Mother of God” (*Athan.*, vol. i. p. 1041).

† Olshansen, at Matt. xxviii. 19.

of the English-Romanist party or of the German-Evangelical party : I mean, of our esteemed friend, my predecessor in this pulpit. I suppose, however, that he assigns a shorter period for the development of doctrine. He says, that if the Messiah, while “ appearing in human form among the rude men of that day, had been continually affirming, in the most unqualified, sudden, peremptory manner, his divine supremacy, it could not fail to confuse and bewilder them, if not to exasperate them, all unprepared for it as their ignorance was, and while his visible shape appeared before them. Even the comparatively few expressions which he did employ, made more distinct and frequent as his ‘hour’ approached, threatened to put an end, and did finally help to put an end, to his ministry in the body. The truth could not shine forth at once, in its peerless glory, upon eyes so dull. He contented himself, in his wise and tender condescension, with pronouncing these comprehensive and weighty declarations of his complete oneness with the Father ; and left the further doctrine of his mysterious nature to unfold itself in the ripening wisdom of his church, under the Holy Spirit which he promised.”

And, in another place, the same writer says of Jesus’ idea in parting from the Eleven, “In a remoter and calmer period, his worship would take its place spontaneously in their hymns, ejaculations, and litanies. *Meantime*,”— that is, until that remoter and calmer period comes, — “he points them to the Father, in whom they are already believing with a more settled and definite faith.” The worship of the Father is to be their religion during the season of their parting from him. The more mysterious doctrine of the Trinity will be revealed to them in calmer and remoter days.\*

\* In the same strain, Alford—the tender, truly Catholic, and learned critic of the Greek text—supposes, that, when Jesus died, even his apostles had never heard of the miracles of his birth. “It was not till the faith of the apostolic Christians was fully fixed on him as the Son of God, and the outline of his person was firmly sketched out, that the Spirit brought out those historical records which assure us of his supernatural conception” (Note at John vi. 43). Yet Mary mother was living while they were all thus ignorant.

I had proposed devoting one or two sermons, as I renew my broken course of service here, to some examination of the various statements which are made regarding the foundation of the Christian Church. I shall try to show, in these sermons, why I adhere to Peter's statement, as being as complete as we can expect, as clear as we can ask. My plan had been, indeed, to preach the first of these sermons to-day; but, on reflection, I see we must examine a preliminary question first. We must determine the authorities to which we are to appeal. How far does the development by the Holy Spirit, of the original doctrine of Christians, affect the original doctrine as to the *foundation* of Christianity itself? that is, did our Lord *himself* clearly explain the foundation to his disciples? You see that the discussion of the Trinity to-day is on a different footing from what it stood on fifty years ago. Then, in our community, both parties held, that, if they could get at the sense of Christ's own declarations, they could get, not only at his doctrine undeveloped, but at its developed, complete, and most scientific statement.\* Now we have to ask, whether our fathers were right in that supposition. Are we to be satisfied with Christ's declarations? or are we to take them with the occasional comments of St. Paul, or the fuller declarations of the councils of the fourth century, as the more complete foundations of our opinion?

To this question, I ask, first, your attention. You see, of course, the interest in which the Roman Church presses the development theory. Let us grant, also, that a grand spiritual truth rests behind its view. "We are the authority," says that church. "A council of our bishops, summoned and presided over by the popes, has an inspiration from the Holy Spirit, which is superior in degree and in kind to the inspiration which is given to any single man. No single man,—no, and no set of men, unless they be bishops consecrated

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\* See, for instance, Dr. Worcester's third letter to Dr. Channing, pp. 12, 13.

by the apostolic succession, meeting at the call of St. Peter's successor — has a right to define a doctrine of religion. No single man, — no, and no set of men — has a right to say what the words of Scripture, though they were the simplest words of Jesus, mean.” In pressing this claim it is, that the Roman-Catholic writers, addressing Episcopalian Protestants, say, “ You are obliged to come to us for your doctrine of the Trinity; you are obliged to come to us for your doctrine as to the sacraments. You take the authority of our Fathers in both of these matters, where you agree with them. You have no authority to sustain you in Scripture, unless you take the comment the Fathers add to Scripture. Why, then, do you reject the doctrine of purgatory? Why do you reject the doctrine of the Pope’s supremacy? to which those same Fathers bear witness much more frequently than to the other two. ‘ You accept the lesser evidence; you reject the greater.’ ” \*

I quote these words from Newman, the great leader of the English “ Puseyites.” They are the appeal to which so many of the English clergy have responded by going over to the church of Rome, where Bishop Newman himself led the way. I confess, I do not see how, logically, they could have done otherwise. I know there are better laws than logical laws sometimes, under which most of them have found shelter: and I do see, therefore, how nine-tenths of the clergy of the church of England were wholly indifferent to Newman’s pitiless appeal; because they held the doctrines of the Real Presence and of the Trinity, as most men do, not as matters of argument, but of sentiment. They were born to them, and they let them lie without proof and without disproof. But when the appeal came to a logical, an inquiring, perhaps rather sceptical mind, again and again saying, “ Why take one doctrine on the authority of the Fathers, and reject another? ” — I can see how, in the mere

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\* Bishop Newman, as above, p. 17.

pride of consistency, such men went over; and I believe we shall see that they have many followers from that midway position. For this I may say, that, in fifteen years since Newman published that appeal,—and, in going over to Rome at the same time, announced his own answer to it,—the church of England has made no adequate reply to it. With that singular policy,—by which most great churches ignore their most dangerous enemies,—she has left this question of questions, whose repetition so saps her living strength, without reply. Or is it that she has none?

What does the church of Rome say to us, who do not hold to the Fathers' doctrine of the sacraments, nor to their doctrine of the Trinity,—who hold that there was an early corruption of Christianity from external sources?

The same writer (Bishop Newman) dismisses us with these words: "This view has no claims on our attention till it is drawn out scientifically; till we are distinctly informed what the Christian or evangelical message is, or if there be any; from what sources it is drawn, how those sources are ascertained to us, and what is a corruption."\* He admits our view of an early corruption of Christianity to be a *plausible* hypothesis,—certainly sufficient to account for the present position of affairs; but he dismisses it, even without examination, until its friends draw it out *scientifically*. Let us be *scientific*, though we die!

I am very sorry to detain you with these opinions of different leaders of opinion; but we must have some notion of them, I think, if we are to come at any clear results in our inquiry.

The Protestant Church, as I said, began by scouting the whole theory of development of doctrine. "The letter of the Bible," it cried, "and nothing more." Practically, however, something more came in everywhere. Some churches kept their old ritual. Every church took the view of the Bible

\* Newman, as above, p. 18.

of its own great men. Luther, Calvin, Knox, Robinson, Edwards, Chalmers, and Channing could not fail to impress on the Bibles which they interpreted the lessons which the Holy Spirit taught them as they studied. As Protestantism relaxed, therefore, from its first horror of Rome ; as it afterwards passed through its first fit of extreme depression ; as, a century ago or more, the true doctrine of the Holy Spirit began to find place, and every man and woman got more real converse with God, listened, and obeyed God in conscience ; as He told of truth and duty, — the idolatrous worship of the letter of the Bible has given way, and the Spirit which dictated it has had freer course and freer. The superstition which would have opened the volume as an oracle, and taken the first text which came as a guide for immediate duty, exists no more. Scarcely more does the kindred superstition linger, which, in any argument as to duty now among the affairs of to-day, would take a single disconnected text, whether from the Book of Chronicles or the Gospel of John, and say, "*Thus saith the Lord,*" in the way which Cotton Mather would have done, or divines still later. In proportion as men grant the centre of Christian doctrine,—that God is *here*, guiding, helping, and teaching each reverent child,—in the same proportion does the Bible become a living revelation, rather than a dead one ; and the child looks at the lesson which was given to fishermen in Galilee, expecting to find the spirit of the divine life, but not necessarily every literal injunction for the complicated duty of London or of Boston. In this more extended view of Scripture, we may note several different hypotheses.

1. There is the theory of those whom, for want of a better name, I must call the extreme Rationalists. They look on the Old Testament as what happens to be left of the literature of Palestine and the neighborhood, mostly relating to the Jews,—a race especially devoted to worship and religious form. Jesus Christ was born of this race, they say; a remarkable development of it. Far above what it had ever

uttered before, his utterances were new instruction, and, so far, new light, to the world. But he was still imbued with some of the prejudice and some of the ignorance of his nation. We must judge what he tells us, then, by the light God gives to us; and accept or reject, as we would in listening to any other teacher. He taught the best he knew; but he, too, was liable to error.

2. I may note the series of views, more or less distinctly defined, of the leading Orthodox divines, which, in result, do not so far vary from this Rationalistic hypothesis. Extremes are meeting always. In every religious body which has a detailed creed to defend, which gives no freedom to the individual inquirer, we shall find men who maintain what the Roman Church calls the discipline of secrecy.\* “It is maintained, that doctrines which are associated with the later days of the church were really in the church from the first, but not publicly taught, and that for various reasons; as, for sake of reverence, that sacred subjects might not be profaned by the heathen; and, for the sake of catechumens, that they might not be oppressed, or carried away, by a sudden communication of the revealed truth.” I use the words of one of the advocates of this view. One of the early Fathers† states it thus in one illustration: “To the carnal, we teach the gospel in a literal way, preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified; but to persons *farther advanced* we communicate the *Logos*.” This view of an esoteric or concealed doctrine is not peculiar to the church of Rome. All Protestants hold it virtually who find essential truth in the Epistles which they do not find in the words of Christ. All Protestants hold it, I think, who say that no man can grasp Christian doctrine until he is converted, while no man can be converted unless he has grasped Christian doctrine. The modern statement of the commentators, that Jesus’ words contained fundamental truth,

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\* *Disciplina Arcani.*

† *Tertullian.*

which he intentionally veiled, so that his apostles even did not apprehend it, belongs to the same hypothesis.

It differs from the Rationalistic theory thus: That teaches that Jesus taught all he knew, but was sometimes in error: this teaches that he knew all truth, but, when he testified, that he concealed a part intentionally; so veiling it, that it should only be developed by the scientific activity of after-days.

3. To the same class of opinions, I might refer the view of those writers who consider Christ's life as having an allegorical meaning behind its apparent meaning. Dr. Bushnell is the most successful representative among us of this school of thought, in which the New Testament is a drama. But different writers of this school use its latitude in different ways; and many of these are such as this philosopher would condemn. Sometimes, for certain ultimate purposes, Jesus assumes the position of a sufferer, and represents to the eyes of men bitter and extreme agony. Sometimes God has prepared "a form of art for the representation of Christ and his work." The whole Passion Week is called a "tragedy," in the sense that it represents something behind. The whole gospel is spoken of as an æsthetic or artistic method of expression of God. Christ is not so much God or man; but he expresses God and he expresses man. Certain representations appear in the gospel history; and, to the gospel times, they are realities: but, to the eye of more advanced science,—that is, of this holy, diligent, far-seeing, self-satisfied nineteenth century, for instance,—it is clear that they are not in themselves real, but the exhibition of real truth; which, to the ignorance of those who looked on, assumed this pictured form. So, we are told, it is given to us to interpret the drama which simpler ages believed was real.

The first of these theories of development, which I have called the Rationalistic, would say that our text expressed more than the truth. "*Jesus is the Son of God*"—would

be the comments — “as we are all God’s children ; but when he claimed that an eternal church was to be built on the truth, that he was the Son of God, he let a Jewish notion of a Messiah creep into his imaginations, and claimed more than was true.”

In the second of these theories, the Roman Catholic would say that Jesus distinctly expressed less than the truth ; that he just hinted at the truth, and left the church to develop and expound it. That Peter was the corner-stone, was just hinted ; and Peter’s successors, and the successors to the other apostles, were left to draw up, from that hint, the doctrine of a hierarchy which should have absolute authority over the soul of man.

The Protestant-Orthodox scholar would listen to this account of development, only to say that another doctrine lay hidden, and could be developed from what appeared. Jesus *said*, undoubtedly, that the foundation of his church was in the assertion, that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God ; but, in this statement, there lay undeveloped the deeper statement, that the Son of the living God *is* the living God. Like the Romanist, the modern Orthodox critic holds, that, in accommodating his language to the imperfections of his hearers, Jesus distinctly expresses here less than the whole truth ; leaving the rest, for remoter times, under a veil.

In the third of these theories,—the dramatic theory,—it would be said that the text was a part of a representation which the eternal God had condescended to make for his children. To make it, he had “abated his attributes,”—had laid aside his omnipotence, his omnipresence, his omniscience, as so many crowns of glory which might dazzle his children. He walked among them representing man. In that attitude he said, “My Father is greater than I ;” which, at that moment, was true. In that attitude, he said he was the Son of the living God ; but, so soon as he should take again the jewels he had left aside, he would become the

living God himself again. The language is the language of eternal truth; but it is toned down to human accents, and even to human ignorance, by infinite condescension. An omnipotent God has condescended for the moment to "do nothing of himself;" so he says, "The Son can do nothing of himself:" which, at the moment the Son is in Jerusalem, is true; but, so soon as the Son ascends into heaven, it will be true no longer. And this text, to him who speaks it, is the truth as he speaks it; but, to those who hear it, does not express the truth. He knows it does not, and he does not mean it shall. Only after-ages, from other sources, will discover the truth which is just prefigured.

I am not satisfied by either of these developments of doctrine. I think the Rationalist statement does Jesus gross injustice; and I think the Romanist statement, and both the Orthodox statements, more gross and more unjust, even in their effort to exalt him. To say that he, knowing he was very God, the living God, the Almighty, the Jehovah, who had made, and was now sustaining, this world on which they trod; whom these apostles had been worshipping since they were children; that he should, with any motive, or in whatever sense, have permitted them to say that he was simply anointed by that God, and that he was his Son, knowing that, at that moment, they did not understand the words as he did,—to say this, appears to me injury as gross (though I know it is not meant as insult) as ever was devised by infidelity, or ever attained by the poor pride of reason.

And the other view—that here is all an acted picture, an external representation; the theory which has to borrow even its language from the theatre, from what is false and is meant to be false; all this about the Son representing something which, in any distinct sense, he was not; of his appearing to be tempted, while, in any distinct sense, he was not tempted; of his living and moving *in the character* of the Son of God, while really and truly he was God himself; all this language about the *altar form*, of which in late

years we have heard much experiment — is simply disgusting to those not trained to it. I wish any protest might be heard, in the right quarters, against the violence it does to the sentiment of Christendom, if not to its convictions. I wish those who use it had any idea of the quiver of sorrow, if not of indignation, with which those, who have been frankly making their Saviour a living example and a constant friend, find him spoken of as personifying a character which did not naturally belong to him, and keeping up reserve and concealment, which only our keenness has been enough to penetrate. This view does not satisfy me : it pains me more than any.

Thus do I set aside three of the theories of development. And yet I also believe in the constant development of Christian doctrine ; and I acknowledge most gratefully, that the church has made a great step indeed, if, with whatever errors, all its leaders are agreed, that, from century to century, the world will know more of Christianity, rather than less. If only it can come to believe that that development is intrusted to the Holy Spirit, wherever he acts, and not simply to his whisper to early councils or modern popes,\* all will yet be well. It is a great advance on the letter-worship of old years, if we see that the Holy Spirit is around *us*, and will guide *us* into all truth. The books of the New Testament are now the earliest monuments of the Divine Life, as the Son of God gave it to mankind. In those books, we have all our knowledge of what he did and what he said ; we see all the picture of the work he wrought on Peter and John and Caiaphas and Judas : but it does not follow that we are only to try to reproduce those books, simply and literally, in the life of to-day. We are not to try to make ourselves second

\* It is to be observed, that no “council” was called in 1854 to decide the definition of the doctrine regarding Mary mother, but only an assembly of prelates known to be favorable to it,—what we should call a “packed convention.” Roman-Catholic writers of distinction insist that Pope Pius did not dare trust the “definition” to a “council,” technically so called.

Peters or second Andrews. We are not necessarily to go about on foot, two and two, preaching the gospel, because they did. We are not necessarily to perform vows in Jewish temples because Paul did. We study in those books the impress of Christ on his time, that, with God's present guidance, we may fully receive his impress upon our time. We do not ask to go back to "tread where he trod;" we do not ask to sit, and mend nets by the Lake of Galilee: but, rather, that in treading on these pavements, and in building this machinery of to-day, the Life Divine which he brought into the world may quicken our life-blood, and give us life more abundantly.

Between that work of Jesus on the handful of fishermen around him, and the work he carries on this day on the hundreds of millions of people, in whose hearts, more or less, he is reigning, the difference is wide indeed. His promise has been fulfilled most graciously,—that the church would do greater things than the apostles did. The Holy Spirit, speaking to who shall say how many hearts, has led them into truth, wider, wider, and wider; and, chief among its gracious influences, it has brought to their remembrance all things that he did, and all things that he said: but it has not proved, that, in what Christ said, he held back any thing; that what he said was insufficient for that time or this time.

The Holy Spirit has not convicted him either of a timid or a reserved or of a half-way declaration. All doctrines of development fail which hint that it has. The life of Christ, which should sweep into our lives, *proves* to be fitted to the most complicated conditions even of this "scientific activity," of which our theologians boast, to those of enlarging discovery, of intricate society, of a world a million times larger than the world of Galilee. Just so it will prove fitted to all the relations of our lives in worlds on worlds beyond, when we walk through infinity, and enter, in God's pleasure, into the duties and the life of the archangels round his throne. As we grow to see this, as we grow to feel it, *our idea* of

its grandeur develops more and more : but when we come back to see what he said of his life ; when we sit at his feet, or listen to those sitting there, we find that the statement he made then and there to the fishermen, as they sat upon the beach, is the statement he will make to the host of heaven when they are all gathered together in the courts of the Almighty. In the triumph of his kingdom, as in the humility of his cross, he will never think of the robbery of equaling God : but always there as here, in heaven as in Nazareth, his word will be as it has been, — that it pleased the Almighty to anoint him ; that he is the Anointed of God. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who discloses God to all his children.

It is a victory, I confess, that the church has advanced beyond that stupid literalism which made an idol of the Bible, and which, if legitimately carried out, would make us rub our corn between our hands for bread, because the apostles did ; and look for a destruction, like Sodom's, of the kingdoms of the world, because they so interpreted Jesus' prophecy. Taking those records of what he said, let us, with the freedom which he gave us, under the guidance of this present God, — as near us as he was to them, — work out the great life-problems of our duty in our day. But we must suppose that he gave us the foundation to build upon. We must grant him the right of stating what that foundation is. We must take the statement of the foundation from him alone.

It is true that we are open to every temptation. So some demon of curiosity may tempt us to define what is indefinable. True, I cannot tell how God acts in my own heart, though I know he acts here ; true, I cannot tell how my soul rules my thinking powers, though I know it does rule them : still some spirit of evil may tempt me to undertake to tell how God acted in the heart of Jesus, and how in him his divine soul was united with human intelligence.

It is human, I suppose, to make such inquiry. Well, then, if I embark on it, let me do it with one proviso. What he said about himself must be sufficient for me; what he told, I must receive as the whole; what he explained, I must take as the full explanation. To do else is to insult him. To let any created man or any body of men sit in judgment on his nature afterwards, to add to his words that which he did not choose to add to them, is to do dishonor to his simplicity; nay, even to his truth.

In this inquiry as to what he was, if we are forced to it, we, who do not know what we are,—we will listen to him, and to him alone. In that inquiry, we will, perhaps, some other day, go farther. To-day, we will remember that this is his central word at the crisis-moment. The foundation of his church is this,—that he is the Christ, the Anointed; the Son of the living God.

## II.

"OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY THAN THAT IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST." — 1 Cor. iii. 11.

PAUL is speaking, in these words, of the building-up of the Christian Church. He has been speaking of his own work in it. He says he can do nothing but build upon the foundation. Here he uses the same figure which Jesus used to Peter, when, in reply to his cry, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he said, "On this rock I will build my church."

I do not propose now to go any farther than this statement of Jesus in inquiring what he considered himself or called himself. He said this was the foundation of his church. Let it be so. In the fact, however, that there is a foundation, it is implied that something will be built upon the foundation. Jesus himself seems, thus far, to grant that his followers have some rights in "developing the doctrine" which they receive from him. They are to build, undoubtedly, on him as a foundation. Paul, in this passage, speaks of his work in such building. I propose, then, now to examine what Jesus says, not in describing the foundation, but in describing the work of his disciples upon it. We will come to him to learn what was his idea of true discipleship. He did propose that the disciples should build. Did he propose that they should "develop" the foundation into any thing more than he gave them? After examining thus his definitions of discipleship, we will in the same manner examine those definitions of discipleship left us by his immediate followers. We shall thus find out from the original sources

what were the first definitions of Christian work in building on the foundation of our faith. Thus we shall find out what are our rights and powers as builders; how much can we do in building on the rock? in what direction can we develop doctrine which has been hidden? and when can we bring out views which Jesus thought "wisest to reserve"?

Now, it happens, that, just as we often have to sum up in brief our religious position, as we want to now, just so Jesus often had occasion to do. As we go on, we shall see, I think, that, in such summings-up, we are to look for the spirit, and not be tied by the letter. One man writes a creed so that it tells how he himself comes to God; but life is lost, you see, when that creed is imposed on another who did not come in precisely the same way. In such matters, if there be the least divergence, the creed does not fit at all. In the mould in which a bust of Venus was cast, you can no more shut up a bust of Clytie than you could a bust of Hercules. Still we find, even in our own daily lives, that there is constant need for condensed explanations of religion, which can be used in familiar language, in answer to eager or even captious inquiry. Such short abridgments do not profess to exhaust religious teaching; but they do set forth the essentials around which the rest shall cluster. Jesus, in his life, found just that necessity. I propose, then, this morning, in our examination of what constitutes Christian discipleship, to examine all those condensed definitions of it which Jesus himself gave. I propose, next Sunday, to examine those given by his apostles. I do not call Jesus' own definitions the creed which he proposed, because he never proposed any; but I do say, they are the forms, which, if any creed is to be taken from his words, must be chosen. They are Jesus Christ's definitions of discipleship. They must be taken as the bases of any expressed creed, if my position is correct,—that what Christ explained as to his own person is the full explanation.

I shall first quote in order all these gospel definitions, and at length. You must not say that they are tedious; for I am going to argue from them afterward. I do not, therefore, choose to abridge them, nor to ask you to take their general sense on my authority; and therefore I prefer to bring all of them forward at length and together. I quote them in order of time, and not in the order in which the books happen to be found together.

Early in Jesus' ministry, he says to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He repeats the same statement afterwards in Galilee: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein." To Nicodemus, once more: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." And yet again: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here, in passing, we observe that John Baptist says, a few days after, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." As Jesus leaves Jerusalem and returns to Galilee, he meets the woman of Samaria; to whom he says, "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." On his next visit to Jerusalem, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life;" and on his third, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And again: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Immediately after this, he returns to Galilee; begins his public preaching among his own countrymen; where the first "foundation text" is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." He sends out his apostles soon after, and gives them this direction: "Preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

He sends out the Seventy, and directs them to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you :" and immediately after, to the lawyer who asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life ?" he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength ; and thy neighbor as thyself." To the Jews at the Feast of Dedication : "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." In the same tenor to Martha, about this time : "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." In Galilee again : "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." To the Jews in Capernaum : "I am the Bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." And "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." And "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." The end of his life is now approaching, and he speaks of his church distinctly now for the first time : it is to be built on this rock ; that he "is the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then the "following him" is explained thus : "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me : whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." And in the same tone, to the young nobleman : "If thou wilt be perfect," or "If thou wilt inherit eternal life, sell all that thou hast, and come and follow me." And in the same conversation : "Every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." This is said when he is on his way, for the fifth and last time, to

Jerusalem. He addresses at Jerusalem, in the last week of his life, to the Twelve, the parable of the sheep and the goats; in which is this statement: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." In parting from the Twelve the next night: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And in the prayer of the Last Supper: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Defending himself the next morning before Pilate, he says, "Every one that is of the *truth* hearth my voice." After his resurrection, he says to the Eleven, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, so have I sent you." And at the very last: "Go ye into all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

These are the texts—and, I think, all the texts—in which Jesus gives his definitions of Christian discipleship. So far as we take him as our authority in the definition of Christianity, we are to include these words in our definitions. Of course, the glad tidings he brought were vastly more extensive than these texts, and comprise many more directions; but so far as he gives any description of what one of his followers is or what he is not,—any test of discipleship, he gives it in these texts. If we may use the words, in these is his body of divinity. So far as he helps us to condense, abridge, or digest his gospel, to put it in statement brief enough to repeat and

remember, he does it in the thirty texts which I have quoted. I certainly do not say, that we have no right to digest or develop his system from other texts; but I do say, that, if we look for his definition or his statement of his system, we find it here. From other reading, we can make our statement as to his church; but it is in these words that we have his.

In about half of these texts, he defines discipleship. In about as many (taking it for granted that it is understood what a disciple of his is), he tells what his disciples will gain. Of the first half, it is certain that these texts do not help those writers who would construct the church by compelling its members to assent to particular theories of human nature or the divine nature. The majority of theologians do this. In defining a Christian, they say that he is one who has such or such intellectual convictions. You see, as I read these texts, how little support that definition has in the letter or in the spirit of Christ's definitions. Jesus does not mean to create a new philosophical party, arriving at one set of opinions on certain important subjects. He does not come to give us opinions merely: he comes to give *the Life* which is beneath all opinions, because it is beneath every thing with which man has to do. He comes to give us new Life. It is life which is to make us walk better, run better, sleep better, eat better, and drink better; the life which is to make us work better, rest better, play and enjoy better; the life which is to make us teach better, learn better,—sail, row, cut, carve, plough, plant, reap, and, in general, subdue the world, better; the life which is to make us hope better, believe better, and love better; the life which is to make us look backward better, and look forward better; the life, best of all, which is to make us endure better, possess our souls in patience better, forgive better, and pray better; the life in which we are to see a living God better, and to come to him nearer. In this enlarged life, this life on the plan of Heaven, this life which begins an angel's life, of course we shall know better and think better.

But it is a very narrow statement of that life to say that it consists only in thinking better and knowing better. Narrower yet is the statement which puts it all in the knowledge of God's nature and our own. Knowledge is something ; but it is not every thing ; and human knowledge, the knowledge man can grasp of God and his designs, is a very small part of every thing. And so it happens, that when, as on all these different occasions, the Lord of Life explains what he gives to his followers, and what they are to try to gain, *he* does not once allude to the knowledge which they are to acquire, to the convictions which they are to form. He does not give, in his own words, the first phrase of a scientific theology. No : he came to enliven the world, to save it from sin, to bring it to God. He left the world, expecting and demanding that his followers should take up this work, and carry it through. He gave them Life : he expected them to give it to others. Demanding this, and nothing less, he looked forward to his church ; but it was not to a company of men and women at work with dictionaries and commonplace books, finding out about "deific energies" and "instrumental inequality," and "speculative cognition of infinite personality," and the rest. He looked rather to a close-knit company of brethren and sisters, knit so close that he could call it a family or a brotherhood, eager that God's kingdom should come. He had revealed God as the Father of them all. He himself loved them all, so that he was willing to die for them all ; and he looked forward, nor vainly as it has proved, to like love of him. Then he said, when he spoke of his church, that this love of him would bind together the members of that church in love ; and, in describing the united family of the children of God thus united in a love which sprang from a love of him, he gave the one sign of discipleship which he ever did give, the only sign and the only test of it : "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." — "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

As you observed, there are four or five other texts which dwell on the love the disciples are to have for each other ; and, as we saw, he speaks of this union between the disciples as to be as close as the union between himself and God. Whatever that union is, such is to be our union. We are to be one, even as Christ and God are one.

He did not expect that this union would come merely because he asked for it. He knew it would never come unless men followed him ; and they could not follow him unless they believed in him. Of these thirty texts, therefore, at least ten speak of the disciples as following him and believing in him. It is clear enough what following him means, though the church has not been very successful in doing it. But what is it to believe in him ? I know the words are indistinct : so, after all, are most words. Still, if we cannot accurately define to others all his intent in them, I think we can really get at it for ourselves if we really choose. To believe in him completely implies that complete confidence in him, that we are willing to follow him, or to make him our Leader. “ Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am : ” and that is the test which he proposes. “ Whoever wishes to come after me must take up his cross, and follow me.” If I believe in him enough for that, there can be no doubt that I believe as he asked me to.

But it is one thing to believe in him, and another to believe or receive any special explanation of his nature. Look at little things in illustration. I believe in the power of electricity so completely, that I implicitly trust my life on a message sent over the wire ; but it does not follow that I can say what electricity is, how it works, why or where it works. On the other hand, while I believe in electricity, I may believe (as, in fact, I do believe) that every man’s theory about electricity is untrue. Or I may believe in the expansive power of steam ; so that, when I mean to go to Worcester, I simply try to connect myself with a steam-engine which is going there. I have only to follow where it takes me. But I

do not have to believe any theory of the steam-engine. It is not necessary that I should have any, even the faintest, idea how God gives to steam the marvellous qualities that it has. Take these as the humblest parables — like flour and leaven parables — of the way in which I am to follow Christ or believe in Christ, and in which he meant I should follow him. I can follow him, sure that he is my divine Leader ; but I need not say how God gives him his Spirit. I can believe in him without believing in any man's "scientific development" of his nature.

Thus is it that Jesus, constantly calling on men to follow him, speaks three times in these thirty texts of their believing in him. The truth is, that, when the following him visibly and constantly required that a man take his cross upon his shoulders, it was very certain, that, if a man followed him, he did believe in him. Through the Gospels, therefore, the test of a belief in Christ is the following Christ. If we make him our Leader really, if we follow our Leader as we live, then we believe in him. If we fail to follow him, it is very certain that we do not really believe.

Such is the drift of the fourteen or fifteen texts which I spoke of as specially defining discipleship. The rest of the thirty texts of definition speak as if there were no question as to what a disciple is, but simply define specifically what a disciple is to gain. We are now to look at them with the others. Of all the thirty, we are now to see what are the promises which Jesus makes for those who follow him. Once his followers are said to be saved ; once, to be children of his Father ; once, to love God ; once, to do the will of God ; once, to worship the Father ; once, to "believe on Him that sent me ;" twice they are said to be near God ; twice, to come to the Father ; twice, to know Christ as the Son of the living God ; twice, to be of the truth. Besides these separate declarations, and, in their great declaration, including each of these, half of these texts of definition (as I have called them)

say that the followers of Christ shall receive life, — shall receive eternal life, shall receive everlasting life, or shall receive life more abundantly. Here, as we saw, was the central object of his mission, — that men who were dead might be alive again ; that they might begin to live. His cures of the sick are so many types of this great cure of a dying world. Its ears are unstopped, and the scales fall from its eyes. The forward march of the lame is another : the world puts its foot to the ground, and from the halt of centuries it presses on. The son of the widow of Nain opens his eyes ; the daughter of Jairus looks up from her death-bed, and smiles upon her mother ; Lazarus comes forth, and they unbind his graveclothes ; and Jesus himself, at the break of day, pushes away the stone from the mouth of the tomb. Little are even these miracles compared with the constant miracle which they illustrate, in which, for century after century, the young men and maidens of the world, who have been dead, wake, and are alive again ; the world's graveclothes are flung by ; its old sepulchres are thrown open : for, at his sovereign word, it follows and it *lives.*

But, if it does not follow, it does not live. These texts of definition give no cover to those who are ready to believe, but are not ready to follow. These texts say nothing about exalting Jesus ; they say nothing about honoring him, either in definition of his nature or in worship of his person. The church, alas ! has longed to make them do so. So easy a thing would it be, were that enough for us, to exalt him in our ritual. Oh ! yes : we could all do that. The church has been willing to borrow every name for his exaltation, to seat him even on the throne of heaven, if only it might buy off the inexorable condition. But no : he says nothing about sitting on the throne of heaven, nothing about our defining his nature, nothing about our worshipping him ; but he does insist that we follow him. A luxurious church has hoped to escape by painting him pictures and building him temples ; a philosophical church has hoped to escape by analyzing his attributes,

and explaining for him his genealogy ; a mystical church, by veiling him in cloud, and making him suffer where we ought to suffer ; and a commonplace church has coolly offered to substitute intellectual adherence to a metaphysical creed for the fulfilment of his inexorable demand. But neither the indolent, the philosophical, the mystical, nor the intellectual, have bought by their substitutes the Life which he promised. He offered himself as our Master, and left us his work to finish. He says to us, “If you obey me, you will *follow* me.” He proved his affection for us in his death ; and he says, “If you believe in me, you will love me.” He meant that we should work at one in this service ; and he says, “If you love me, you will love one another.” His true followers must listen to these demands. They must not be tempted by any of the cheap substitutions. They must not be diverted to any of the side-issues of the dreamers. They must tread resolutely in his footsteps. They must drink eagerly of his life. They must take bravely hold of the work he gave them to do. If they mean really to go after him, they must take up each his cross, and follow.

### III.

"OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY THAN THAT IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. NOW, IF ANY MAN BUILD UPON THIS FOUNDATION GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE, EVERY MAN'S WORK SHALL BE MADE MANIFEST: FOR THE DAY SHALL DECLARE IT, BECAUSE IT SHALL BE REVEALED BY FIRE; AND THE FIRE SHALL TRY EVERY MAN'S WORK OF WHAT SORT IT IS."—1 Cor. iii. 11-13.

THE work spoken of is the building-up of the Christian Church. Paul has said, just before, that he claims no personal authority in building it up. He is nothing; but he has done what he could. What he has done, or what any man has done, must be tested by time.

The passage, therefore, is a leading passage among those which show what the apostles thought respecting their rights in unfolding or developing the doctrine of Christ and the external structure of his church. The one thing certain is always the foundation; viz., that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. On that foundation, they are all building as they can; hoping to bring about that kingdom for which they are sent. But, as they build, Paul and James and John never claim to be themselves corner-stones, as the modern church claims for them. They never claim to stand in the place of Christ: still less do they claim what Romanists and Protestants together claim for them,—to unfold fundamental doctrine which Jesus did not unfold, or which he has reserved. They take the tone, rather, of the most humble preachers of our day. They say, "We teach Christ according to the grace which is given us. If we teach him truly, our work will stand; for he does not change. Where we are wrong, the harm is transient; for, if our work is stubble, it will be de-

stroyed. Only the foundation is sure. The foundation is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I am now to prove that this is the view these men took of their position, and of the foundation on which they were building. This is a necessary part of our inquiry into the historical question, What were the foundations of the Christian religion? It is necessary also in our other inquiry, What are the rights of the church in developing doctrine concealed or reserved by our Master? I have already repeated here the texts in which Jesus himself distinctly defines discipleship, or gives any tests of discipleship. With the same conditions which I then laid down, I am now to repeat the definitions of Christianity given by the apostles or first disciples. As I repeat these texts, I ask you to observe all along the sensitiveness with which they refrain from seeming to add any thing of their own in the foundation. They all build *upon* the foundation: "But other *foundation* can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The apostles' definitions of Christianity — that is our subject. In grouping them together, I acknowledge that the apostles taught a great deal which is not included in these definitions. So they taught a great deal which has not come to us at all. I cannot, then, pretend to condense all they taught; but here are their specific definitions of discipleship: and I claim that they must have laid down in such expressions all they thought essential or fundamental; and whoever wants to make a creed or formula of the foundation of the church must make it, unless he reject their authority, out of these early definitions of theirs, — unless he is satisfied with those of Jesus which I read last Sunday. I quote from the Acts and the Epistles, in the order of time, just as I did from the Gospels.

Just after the ascension, at the day of the great Pentecost, Peter says, "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved;" quoting the Prophet Joel, and saying that that time had come: and then, when they were pricked in

their hearts, and asked, “What shall we do?” he says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and *ye* shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And, the same day, three thousand were added to the disciples. The first description given of the church is, “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” The Samaritans were baptized “when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” Peter, preaching at Cæsarea, sums up by saying that Jesus of Nazareth was slain by the Jews. “God has raised him up,”... “and commanded us to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” The Holy Ghost then fell on all who heard the word. Paul, preaching in Antioch, sums up in these words, after saying that God has raised Jesus from the dead: “Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and, by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which *ye* could not be justified by the law of Moses.” After the dissension as to the Gentile converts, Peter says of them, “God bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did to us;” and his argument shows that he regards this as the test of discipleship. On his second journey, Paul was in prison at Philippi; and when the jailer came running to him, and asked what he must do to be saved, Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” At Thessalonica, the Jews who believed had been taught “that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus is Christ;” and the Athenian converts believed the same thing. Paul writes from Corinth two letters to the little church at Thessalonica; but he does not so much as suggest in them any test of discipleship, or any definition of what a Christian is; nor is any mentioned in the history of eighteen months

which he spent at Corinth. But at Ephesus, meeting some of John Baptist's followers, he explained to them that John meant "they should believe on him who came after him;" that is, on Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. In a letter written to Corinth about this time, our text comes in : "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ ;" and this : "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand ; by which also ye are saved, unless ye have believed in vain." This gospel is, "That Christ died for our sins ; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day ;" and that he was seen of Cephas, of the twelve, of five hundred brethren at once, of James, of all the apostles, and of Paul.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul thus describes their church : "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,"—a mystical phrase, explained immediately afterward as "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Again : "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

To the church at Rome, Paul wrote his most elaborate letter, eager to remove their suspicions that he was a radical disorganizer. To them he says, "God has set Christ Jesus forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare God's righteousness ; that God might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."—"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And "so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." In his speech to the Jews at Jerusalem, Paul said he was baptized himself ; "washing away his sins, and calling on Jesus' name." And to Agrippa,

summing up his own preaching : “ I continue witnessing that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.” Near the end of his life, writing from Rome to the Ephesians, Paul says, “ Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.” And he describes the object of the church and its ministry to be, that “ we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

To the Colossians, there is this charge : “ If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

The Epistle to the Hebrews — probably not written by Paul — contains no single passage, in its magnificent practical appeals, which can properly be called a definition of Christianity. Indeed, the drift of the letter is, that while the old covenant had *ordinances* of service, under the new, the disciple was left to the greatest liberty, perhaps to absolute personal independence, in his allegiance to the Most High.

In the Epistle of James, there is this definition : “ Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this : To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Peter, in his First Epistle, speaks of the elect, whom he addresses thus : “ Not having seen Jesus Christ, [yet] ye love him ; believing in him, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” In his Second Epistle, he describes them as those who have obtained like precious faith “ with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Immediately after, he says, “ Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue ; and to vir-

tue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. . . . If ye do these things, ye shall never fall. So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

St. John says, in opening his First Epistle, "This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you,—that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." He afterwards gives us this definition : "Hereby we do know that we know Jesus Christ, if we keep his commandments." And "hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Again : "In this the children of God are manifest. . . . Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—"Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us ;" and "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."—"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."—"He that hath the Son hath life." In the Second Epistle : "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." And in the Third : "He that doeth good is of God."—"He that doeth evil hath not seen God."

These are, I think, all the texts which can be spoken of as being the apostles' definitions of Christianity. I have extended to the utmost, as in the last two, the range by which I have admitted texts into their number.

You will observe in them, first, how much more discursive is the language of the apostles, how much less pointed, than those vivid, condensed words of Christ himself, which I brought together last Sunday. You will observe, next, the reason of the difficulty which the moderns find in constructing from these writings what they call a "scientific theology."

This reason appears, *first*, in the modesty with which the apostles kept back their own notions. “Who, then, is Paul? who is Apollos?” they cried. “We are only the officers,—the servants through whom ye believed.” They never dreamed of using such inspiration as they had in “developing scientifically” doctrines which the Lord had reserved. Their simple business was to apply in practice Christ’s life to the every-day work of Corinth or of Babylon or of Rome. If they did this well, their work would stand; if they did it ill, it would not stand. It proved that they did it well. The Foundation was sure.

*Second*, and chiefly, you see that modern theologians fail to get “a scientific development” of doctrine from the words of the apostles; because what we call doctrine, in our modern sense, was then so very small part of the Christian system. It never occurred even to Paul, the most speculative of the apostles, that intellectual doctrine and definition — “scientific development,” as we call it — would ever receive that attention which the church has given it. Paul even says some very sharp things in ridicule of science falsely so called. In fact, where the word “doctrine” comes in, it almost always alludes to moral conduct; and the very idea of a church resting on concurrence of opinion does not appear in the Epistles more than it does in the words of Christ. Of course, such a church is conceivable: it is, in a manner, possible. You may found an association on agreement of opinion, just as you may found it on similarity of occupation, as an artist’s club is founded; or on the accident of birth, as the St. Patrick’s Society or St. Andrew’s Society is founded: but there is not a particle of evidence, either in Jesus’ definitions of Christianity or in his apostles’, that they were founding Christianity on any such concurrence of opinion. On the other hand, it is clear that they had a very different organization, if I may call it so, in view.

“If I may call it so.” But I am afraid that that name *organization* veils the great idea. The idea is, that, by por-

traying to all men and women in this world, Jesus our Saviour; his love for us, his work for us, and his death; by obeying his instructions, by receiving his spirit, and by living his life,—we shall touch heart after heart, and make quicker their pulses; so that, with a life completely new, those hearts will beat, and those men and women live. Then the idea is, that those who are thus alive will look wildly round for blind eyes that they can open, for broken hearts they can soothe, for dead lives they can awaken; that in the rapture and energy, the joy yet dissatisfaction, of awakened life, they will look, on the one hand, on Him who thus touched them; and, on the other, at the world, for whose life he died. It is supposed, then, that as one after another thus look, both on him and on the world, in every tribe, in every nation,—as Jews and Elamites, Asiatics, Romans, and Africans,—men and women who do not know each other's names or language or *opinions*,—begin to live with this unselfish ardor, as they begin to go and come with this spirit that is in him,—a new bond will attract them to each other. Only *attract* is too mean a word: *bond* is only too hard a figure. *Love* is the only expression grand enough, and enough tender; and of that, alas! the sound has been so profaned, that it does not speak what Jesus thought of or what John entreated. The great idea is, that in this unity of spirit, this unity of hope, this unity of desire, all these scattered individuals, who in Cappadocia, in Mesopotamia, in the parts about Cyrene, or in imperial Rome, love the Lord, will, of course, love each other; and that, without tablets of stone, without articles of confederation, without compromise or constitution, without a contract mutually signed, without a covenant drawn up and attested, most of all, without a creed defining shades of opinion, that great unorganized company will be one; one, without written instrument or formal definition, even as Christ and God are one; one in spirit, one in object, one in motive, one in hope, one in victory.

Under this conception, when the apostles speak of the disciples, they speak of them as *followers of Christ*, just as he did. The test-sign of that following was the taking the cursed, detested, and despised *name* of Christ. Were they willing to do that? Yes! if they believed in him as their Saviour. No! if they believed in themselves. Thus is it, that following him, or taking his name, were the tests, and the only tests, of belief in him. And belief in him is—belief in Him! It is not the belief in any council of bishops, who have developed scientifically the doctrine he *reserved*. It is not the belief in any Athanasius, who has proposed a definition of his nature. It is not the belief of any theory of his person. It is not the belief of any genealogy *about* him. It is the loyal acceptance of him as the Leader of life, as the Anointed of his God and ours.

Certainly, then, I do not ask you to examine these texts of definition, or those from Jesus' own lips, which I collected last Sunday, with any view to distilling from them a doctrine of his person, Unitarian or Trinitarian. True, they are, in fact, Unitarian in every title,— helplessly Unitarian, pitilessly Unitarian, as we have seen Trinitarian critics, Roman and Protestant, allow. But it is not for that that I quote them: I quote them to show that the idea of Jesus and the apostles was of something entirely beyond the accidental concurrence of metaphysical or historical opinion. The unity of the church which they contemplated was infinitely more grand: so they describe it as one body, of one life, of one soul, whose very strength consists in the utter unlikeness of its members. Or now it is a great kingdom, with one king, but with subjects *so* different from each other,— the parts wholly unlike; green meadows here, blessed by the sunshine; bleak mountain-cliffs there, breasting the storm. To describe the range of that kingdom, Jesus himself declares human language powerless. Why, he takes his images from the lightning blazing through the whole sky, from the deluge whelming the whole earth, and then says those images are too

narrow. Never does he, never do his, stoop from such images to any wretched verbal formulas in the least resembling our covenants or creeds. Everywhere, rather, there is the idea, not of an enlisted army, measured by one fixed standard, and known by one fixed confession ; but of a whole land revealed in the darkness of midnight by one flash of lightning ; or, as in the other figure, of this great rolling ocean, which looks up to God, is ordered by God, and obeys God, though each wave-crest offers its own homage, each tide-surge worships in its own way. "How lawless !" mutters the scientific theologian, standing on the beach. "What rebels !" cries the petty prince from some sectarian heptarchy, as the disobedient tide drives him from his throne upon the sand. But the great God looks on, and sees that there is no rebellion, and that there is perfect law. This ocean never rests. It pants, it heaves, or it throws up its blue waves till they crest themselves with white, and faint away ; or they pour on incessant, one infinite procession, to fling themselves in order against the shore ; or they drop into a sleep, which is not death, but breathes steadily and regularly as a sleeping child, and so in their calm reflect the blue of heaven ; or they fling themselves higher and higher toward the sky, dropping down exhausted, only to start up again with one effort more ; or, lying still beneath His sunshine, they deliver to his demand the unseen vapors, which he transfuses into delicious showers with which to bless the thirsty ground. And in this rest or in that convulsion, tide-wave, wind-wave, white crest, spray-dust, or unseen vapor-cloud, each, in its own beautiful service, obeys one law of attraction, — fulfils the word of Him who sets it in order. That is the image Christ chooses to describe his church. There is no precise similarity between its combing waves ; nay, none between the separate drops which make up its waves. But, because they all obey one law of love, the church, the kingdom of the Lord, is one.

The believers are one in life ; or, if we analyze life into its elements, they are one in faith, one in hope, one in love, —

the greatest of the three. Here are *two* words which the men of science have never been able to pervert. Love and Hope, they can do nothing with : they escape their crucibles. So far as they have compelled the church to wear one uniform, it has not been by quoting any of the texts which speak of Love, or of Hope, her gracious sister. They have rather sought to digest their systems by what is said of *Faith*; and it has only been by dwarfing the idea of Faith, by cramping her feet with Chinese sandals, confining her chest as with iron corsets, stopping her mouth as with the gag of the Inquisition, blinding her eyes as with the bandage of the executioner, by handcuffing her hands, by fettering her feet, and then clipping the feathers of her angel-wings, that the Church has succeeded at all in her interpretation of Faith to her children. Why, Jesus spoke to a sect of literal verbalists. Paul spoke to nations of mere sensual tastes. And all the apostles — nay, all preachers to this day — are thus addressing a world which asks for tangible signs ; which likes to go where it can see or hear or taste ; which lives, as the brutes live, by the laws of external matter. To such a world, Jesus speaks. To such a world he brings life ; and that life is, that it shall not seek longer for these signs without, but listen to God within. It is to live, not by the evidence of the seen, but by the evidence of things which are not seen. It is to listen, not to thunders and earthquakes, not to tempests, not to trumpets, not to explosions, but to a still small voice, — to the present God. You are all God's children : listen all to your Father. God is not far from you : his kingdom is at hand. Here is God ; now is God. Listen and obey.

Who listen, listen in faith ; who obey, obey in faith. And we need not wonder, therefore, that Jesus and the Twelve, in one unbroken appeal, beg for more *faith*, and more. We need not wonder that faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, should be allied with hope, because God is good, and with love to all God's children ; that the three are displayed as the elements of the angels' life, of our lives eternal.

In seeking faith like that, what madness to return to Jewish letter-worship ! What madness again to turn, like Greeks, away from the voice of the present Spirit, when we seek it ! This faith is the sense of law above. All written law — we will not try to write that down. This living God, in whom we live, in whom we move, in whom we have our being, — we will not define him in words, — which is to set limits to him in words, — more than we would define him or display him in ivory, in silver, or in gold. This Holy Spirit is God in our hearts, lives in us, and gives us life. Let us welcome him, make him at home by our welcome, and obey him in our lives. Thus, and thus only, shall we know that Scripture, that “by faith the just shall live.”

## IV.

"YE BELIEVE IN GOD: BELIEVE ALSO IN ME." — John xiv. 1.

I HAVE now examined the definitions of Christianity left us by Jesus Christ and by his apostles. I have not done so because we ought to take any one of them, and go about measuring other people's Christianity by it; and certainly I have not done so because we ought to satisfy ourselves by any limitation on our Christianity which any single definition may imply. The Christian life knows no limitations. It must be improving, or it is nothing. No: I have asked you to study these definitions rather, because they are generally overlooked in the popular discussion of the essentials of Christianity. A habit has sprung up, of giving the name *evangelical*, or *gospel-born*, to that system of theology of which the earliest definition was made in the Athanasian Creed more than four hundred years after Christ's death.\* The word "evangelical" is thus used by one of our sects in religion. It is true, that, in the same way, the word "democratic" is used as a name by one of three parties in our politics, though all the three hold to democratic government; and the word "republican" by another, though they all hold to republican government; and the word "American" by a third, though all three hold to American government. And it is in this way that the habit has grown up of calling those sects "evangelical" who hold to the present modified forms of Calvin's recension on Anselm's improvements upon Athana-

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\* For the Athanasian Creed is not the work of Athanasius, and cannot be traced farther back than the end of the *fifth* century.

sius and Augustine. I think there is some danger in the constant use of such a phrase, without an occasional protest. I have, therefore, thought best to renew that protest now. I have quoted Christ's definitions of Christianity, and the definitions made by his apostles, to show that they did not restrict Christianity within the dogmatic lines of our "scientific theologies."

I have had another object, more important than this. In the first of four sermons, I gave my authorities for saying that the leading Trinitarian authorities of our time no longer attempt the direct support of their theories from the Gospels, but seek it rather in that "development" which the church made from the doctrine of the Gospels. In especial, they recur to the work of the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries in that development. They grant, what I claim, that in the New Testament, as it stands, their theories would scarcely be discovered by one not previously informed ; but, still, they claim that they are latent there. They are hidden away, ready to come forth when one knocks at the door who is rightly commissioned, well instructed, and inspired of the Holy Spirit. Thus the church of Rome even now defines new doctrines. Thus, in the English Church, we are told, that, when Christ died, the apostles themselves had never heard the story of his birth,—not even from Mary mother. It was not until after he died that the Holy Spirit prepared their minds to receive it. And the very latest commentator in this line tells us that Jesus left the apostles Unitarians ; only he meant, that in a remoter and calmer period, by a spontaneous voice, they should address to him that homage, due to an infinite God, which now he condescended not to claim. He kept it in reserve.

Now, I say again, that I have no objection to the statement, that there is much more in the Bible than he who runs can read ; and I thank God with all my heart, that the Orthodox schools are beginning to free themselves from the old slavery of the letter. I thank God that they are working round to

see that the Christianity of every generation ought to be on a higher plane than that of the generation before. Is this kingdom a tree? — it ought to grow from year to year. Is it a fire? — it ought to be hotter with every new day. A great point has been gained on the old critical hammering over aorists and particles, the old battles about readings and manuscripts, when the leaders of the creed-bound sects are forced to say, that they hold to truth which the mere letter of Scripture does not teach them. Or, let me say more simply, a great point is gained, if now they give the Holy Spirit some *present* share in the instruction of the world.

Certainly I welcome the theory of the development of doctrine, especially when it comes from such lips as these. The world has waited for it long enough; and, in God's mercy, it has come. It is only in a point of detail that we have to take issue with those who proclaim it.

Who is to develop the doctrine? They answer, "The Holy Spirit." So do we. The Holy Spirit is to unfold it. We are still in accord; nay, in unison. Who shall the Holy Spirit speak to? Here comes the present point of difference. Who shall the Holy Spirit speak to?

1. The Roman Church says, he shall speak to a council of bishops called by the Pope.

2. All Protestant Orthodoxy says he spoke to certain councils of bishops held at Nice, at Constantinople, at Toledo, and at other places, between thirteen and fifteen centuries ago.

3. All Liberalism says yet again, the Holy Spirit must speak *to us*, or we cannot hear. In us he must develop this doctrine; and we will not go for the development to any council, nor to any Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, Origen, or Irenæus, of them all.

Between these three answers is Christendom divided. Of the Roman answer, I now say nothing. Of the Orthodox answer, I know that my statement seems hard. I know that Protestant Orthodoxy does not like to admit its dependence

on the great definitions of the fourth and fifth centuries. But I cannot help that. So long as Orthodoxy drinks that cup, it is nothing that she winces. She takes the advantages of those definitions: she must take their disadvantages. She holds up, I mean, what she calls the assent of the church, from the time of Athanasius to the time of Luther, in the doctrines of the Trinity, of total depravity, and of the suffering of God, for man's offences, in the place of man. She paints you the grand picture of an undivided church placidly marching on in these doctrines for those thousand years,—a blessed millennium. She shows you that modern dissent from them is only three centuries old: that it was only when the Bible was thrown open; only when printing began; only when the Commons first gained their rights in the State, and free inquiry first got its own; only then that the separate murmurs got voice loud enough to be heard. She shows you, that, for the blessed thousand years before, those definitions had not been challenged: they had been held fixed and sure. She claims all the immense advantage of the fact, that the poetry of that thousand years, its other fine art, and its rich stores of devotional expression, formed themselves around the theological formulas drawn up for the church by the councils which I have named, and the men who wrought for them. "See how men did agree," she cries, "in the darkest ages of the church!" Why should they not agree now?

I say, that an Orthodoxy which takes these advantages from the assent to one system of scientific theology through the dark ages must take the disadvantages also. It is true, that after Europe grew barbarous, and broke up into different countries, without common ties, all the churches in those countries held nominally to the standards of scientific theology laid down before the division. It is true also, that during a thousand years of sleep, in which *no* new principle in science was established, none was established in scientific theology. No improvement was made in government, none in education, none in law, none in literature. As little was

any made in the formulas of ecclesiastical opinion. It is true, that, during those centuries in which no author rose to any sort of lasting eminence in any walk of science or of letters, no great change was attempted in the theological formulas which had been laid down before the dissolution of the Roman Empire. But it is true, on the other hand, that, the moment the world was re-born, the men, from whom its new birth is dated, protested, every one of them, against some feature of those formulas. The dawn of the modern world is to be hailed in the work of such men as Dante, as Chaucer and Wiclif, as Tauler and Thomas à Kempis ; heretics, every man of them ! men who began, with the first struggles of their new life, the protest, which will never die, against the uniformity of the dead millennium. Granting, however, that substantial uniformity which existed for a thousand years before : I say, Orthodoxy must take the sour with the sweet. She asks us to assent to that to which the leaders of the universal church assented so long ; and we ask, “ What was the authority to which they assented ? ” The necessary answer is, “ *The Athanasian Creed*, and the Fathers who cluster around that creed. They are to be our judges in the scientific development of doctrine.”

To persons fond of history, it is well worth while to study the conflicting views of those Fathers and those councils. They may, with profit, go back to the tangled web of opinions out of which the creeds of those councils were born. These councils all had equal rights. Yet, of some, the decisions live a day ; of some, the creeds claim to be for ever the scientific doctrine of Christendom. But we need not here follow Orthodoxy into that line of study.

For Liberalism in religion makes the third answer I have named. We claim that the Holy Spirit must help us to the development of Christian doctrine. We cannot admit the authority over us of any of those councils or any of those men. Undoubtedly they had right to develop scientific doctrine from the teaching of Jesus, and of the six apostles

and two evangelists who left writings behind ; but the church of to-day has the same right, and it has just as much material to work upon. If the world to-day is purer and better than it was in the days of the crash of the Roman Empire ; if our civilization is more Christian, if our science is more careful, if our learning is more profound, than those of the Eastern and Western Empire, just as their lights flickered out in thick darkness, — we have a better right to develop doctrine than had any of these councils or any of these Fathers. To pretend that they had any traditions as to doctrine, which had escaped every pen for three centuries, is absurd. How much tradition have you in your families, of what your ancestors knew or what they suffered, of what was their opinion or what their martyrdoms, when they were English men and women, three centuries ago, living under the reigns of Henry the Eighth and Bloody Mary ? And to submit the doctrine of the church to the arbitration of the bishops of that barbarous age, when they were themselves at civil war regarding the arbitration ; to take for the agreed formula of doctrine a statement drawn up in a time so benighted, that not one of its statements in law, in morals, in poetry, or in philosophy, is esteemed worth a straw, — is only an indication of the difficulty, amounting almost to impossibility, of agreeing upon any formula. The *truth* is, that, after the Athanasian formula had imposed itself upon Christendom, Christendom sunk into a night so deep, that, for a thousand years, it could not even protest any longer. To this death-like torpor its millennium of uniformity is due.

I do not, then, pursue the history of the definitions of doctrine any farther down. After we have left the apostolic definitions of Christianity, there are none which have higher claim to deference than our own. We stand, therefore, by the Liberal answer, as to the development of doctrine. The Holy Spirit shall unfold to our hearts the doctrine of the

Lord. We reject, from end to end, any special authority of the Fathers.

At this point it is that Liberal religion meets the anxiety constantly expressed,—that, in our religious system, we are nowhere. Liberalism, people say, is Latitudinarianism. Religious freedom, they say, is the freedom to have no religion. One man's religion is one thing, and another's is another: therefore unity is impossible. This anxiety expresses itself in a thousand ways. "You make religion something all out-doors," says one; and others ask us, and very fairly, "What do you believe; if you are not bound to formulas of *scientific doctrine*?"—"Unitarians have a name: what does that name mean?"—"What is the starting-point?"—"Grant that, in the Liberal body, there is wider range than in the bodies of close communion: what are their points of unity, of agreement, of accord?"

This is a class of questions which we Liberal Christians ought to answer. It is mere child's play for us to say that we do what we think right, every man in his own eyes. We stand before the world, and want to give our light to the world. That light is real, and we have to show that it is real. We claim to be Christians. We must, then, show a vital tie to Jesus Christ. When, then, men say, "You put Christianity all out-doors," I answer, "Yes, we do; or, rather, the Lord did it for us."\* The new covenant is disenthralled, unfettered; and those who accept it are free in the range of heaven. When they say, again, "Who are you? what are you? what do you believe?" I answer, "We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" or, in the words of Peter's confession,—which Christ himself calls the corner-stone of his church,—"That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Of this statement, however,—which seems to me ample as to the foundation, and as much as any Christian man

\* I owe this very happy epigram to the most modest of my friends.

has a right to demand of a Christian brother,—a “scientific theology” complains that it is indefinite; and a storm of after-questions follows, as to how we test discipleship: “How do we define it? how do we explain it?” To which the logical answer is, That it is none of our business to test it, to define it, or to explain it. We are expressly warned not to judge, lest we be judged. We are expressly told that Jesus himself will not judge our opinions; that there is One that judgeth,—his God and ours. I conceive this to be a sufficient logical answer. But, because I grant that a logical answer never satisfies curiosity with unlogical minds, I never rest upon this answer. I am always willing to say that the tests of discipleship are laid down by Jesus and by the apostles, and that I am willing to abide by any of them. Thus: “By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;” or, “Whoso doeth the will of God, the same is my mother or sister or brother;” or, “Can any man forbid water that these should be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” Take these as tests, or any other of the seventy definitions of discipleship which you may find in the New Testament.

It is at this point that the two wings of the church really part company. The sects with scientific creeds want us to go on, and make scientific definition of the person of Christ, the person of God, the person of the Holy Spirit, and the rest. On our part, we decline that definition, except as matter of curiosity: we declare that it has no concern whatever with the essentials of discipleship. It is on that demand for uniform definition on the one hand, and on that refusal on the other, that the great issue joins.

I confess, the division does not seem to me the important breach which they consider it on the other side. I am sorry for them. I pity them from the bottom of my heart. I believe all rangers, all light troops, always pity the men who are caged up in garrisons. I believe all men who can go out-doors

always pity those who are forced to stay at home. But, while I pity them, I know, of course, that soldiers in garrison also do good service; and really it is so easy to desert, that one need not shed tears for those who choose to stay. And, on the other hand, for any one of us who gets tired of freedom, who wants to rest himself in-doors, I am sure there always seems to be a very cordial welcome. I cannot conceive that the world is long to be deluded by the belief that the Liberal schools are false or dangerous, so long as we loyally build on the same foundation on which the Orthodox schools affect to build. We build on the rock which they build upon. From the essential, they develop doctrine in their way: we develop it in ours. What then? Why, every man's work that he has builded will be tried as by a fiery trial. The gold will stand; the stubble will be burned. I am willing to leave the test of our developments there.

For, to conclude this review of the Foundations, there are certain essential facts of Christianity about which the church has never divided. It is perfectly easy to fix a starting-point from which the different lines of development begin. These essential facts may be stated in the words of Scripture, or they may be condensed into shorter expression. It was in the effort, doubtless, to state these facts briefly, that creeds began. The earliest creeds are only short digests of the facts of Christianity. It was only in later times, less religious and more speculative, that creeds took the shape of the resolutions which we pass at public meetings; when, from statements of fact which could be proved or disproved, they became statements of mere speculation or opinion. Early in the history of the church, several of these simple creeds were digested into the creed which the whole church has used in its practice from that day to this day,—the creed which takes the name of the Apostles' Creed. This creed contains the facts from which all Christians start in their separate development of doctrines. This is the creed

which the older churches taught to their children in their infancy. Its substance had established itself, I think, within three hundred years after Jesus died. It was, therefore, substantially in wide use before the passion for scientific theology began. After that fashion came in, it was still the formula for all but the learned. And when we picture to ourselves the great company of believers, pressing on with one accord to the heavenly city; when we look in fancy on the deathbeds which have been cheered, on the martyrs who have passed to glory, under the light of one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,—if we descend so low as to ask what were the concurrent opinions of all this host, we have no right to suppose that they held to the thunders of the Athanasian Confession. The Church has never taught it to her babes, never proclaimed it in her daily worship. She has held it in reserve, as a choice symbol for those elect to her *mysteries*. She has never put it in the forefront of her ritual, of her catechizing, of her missions. When she taught the Lord's Prayer to her little ones, she has taught them another creed as the accepted digest of the facts of their religion. That practical creed of Christendom has proved to be enough for the Church's humbler martyrs, if it were not enough for her philosophers; and they, as they went to daily martyrdom or to the martyrdom of the stake, have gone there, even ignorant of the existence of the unintelligible formula, as followers of a Master whom they knew and loved.

That earliest creed describes the historical belief of every Unitarian as well as of every Trinitarian. It describes ours better than it describes theirs.\* It is the creed which, Bishop Newman says, favors the Unitarian rather than the Trinitarian hypothesis. That creed I shall teach to my children,

\* Thus the Trinitarians of almost all schools are fond of maintaining that Christ, the second person in the Trinity, "made the worlds." Thus Alford says, "The Logos is identical with Jesus Christ: . . . it is he who made the worlds." Yet the Apostles' Creed distinctly says that God *the Father*, the first person in the Trinity, is the Maker of heaven and earth.

as an answer to this daily question, “What do Unitarians believe?” I advise you, my friends, to teach it to yours; not because it is so complete a statement as the statement of Christ himself, but because it is a statement which, through all history, the Church has held to, and which, though it might contain much more indeed, is still a symbol of her union. This creed and the Lord’s Supper survive through all the storms of discussion and of science, as two external symbols,—that, at heart, the Church is one.

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;  
 Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
 Born of the Virgin Mary;  
 Suffered under Pontius Pilate;  
 Was crucified, dead, and buried;  
 The third day, he rose from the dead;  
 He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God,  
 the Father Almighty;

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,  
 The holy catholic church,  
 The communion of saints,  
 The forgiveness of sins,  
 The resurrection of the body,  
 And the life everlasting.”

There is the condensed statement of the facts of religion, which, for fifteen hundred years or more, the Church at large has taught to her children. In later years, one phrase was added to it, which I have not read, because it is unquestionably modern. I confess, that a better statement might be made from the very words of the apostles; but, as it happened, this statement was made,—a statement of the foundation-facts of Christianity. It is a statement to which, fairly interpreted, every Christian man may in good faith assent.

It bears the mark, doubtless, of the time which created it. It has not the simplicity of Jesus; it has not the directness of the apostles, whose name it bears: but it does not leave the facts in the quest for speculation about the fact. In the history of the church, therefore, it marks well enough the dividing-point where one wing of the army marches off in search of a scientific theology; where the other keeps on in less scientific form.

Of the details of that symbol of belief, and, in general, of the Unitarian efforts to unfold the doctrines of those earlier days, I am to speak another Sunday.

## V.

"AND I WILL PRAY THE FATHER, AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU ANOTHER COMFORTER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE WITH YOU FOR EVER." — John xiv. 16.

WHAT is called the Apostles' Creed was not written by any of the apostles. It is not even a very early statement of the historical facts of our religion. It is rather a compilation made from parts of several early statements, with some additions intended to meet heresies of a later date. It is not, again, a specially successful abridgment of the great facts of Christian history. None the less, however, has it an interest all its own; for it does mark the union of the whole church. It lays down the central facts to which all Christian speculations gravitate, and around which, in their different orbits, they revolve. Very different are those orbits, it is true; and those believers who move in one, lead lives strangely different from those of others. As the inhabitants of the distant Saturn must live in ways very strange to us who live upon this world, so does the Romanist, in the orbit of his faith, find very different light and heat in his religion from what you gain, or I, from ours. Yet as the orbit of Saturn and that of this earth alike are both governed by the binding influence of the sun, so does every Christian believer's faith gravitate to the central facts of Christian history. It must be confessed, that some orbits are like those of comets, and that the speculators rush off, like comets, into regions very dark and very cold,— very distant, indeed, from the centre. None the less is the centre there. And so we find in history, that while one speculation is popular at one time, and another at another, so that one or another of the speculative creeds is in fashion among the doctors, the real heart of the church is

always true to home. The great central facts, about which there is no critical dispute, are held to by that great body of men who know but little of the doctors, and care less for them. Because these central facts are well enough stated in the Apostles' Creed, in a form which has been repeated through Christendom for fourteen hundred years or more, that symbol has an importance all its own. It becomes the token of union; and so it takes the popular name of *The Creed*, as if there were no other. It is, indeed, a statement which can be understood, and can be remembered. It is a statement of subjects of fact which admit of proof. So far, again, it differs from those creeds of speculation which can neither be understood, remembered, proved, nor disproved. This constitutes its pre-eminence.

There is no Christian who would say that his religion was summed up in it. Yet almost every Christian man might, in good faith, give a general assent to it, without twisting it from a legitimate meaning. I say this boldly: for I am sure the Unitarian can give this assent; and I know that Trinitarians do give it, although I do not understand how.

Regarding God, the statement of the Apostles' Creed is, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, who made heaven and earth." It thus opposes Christianity to the faith of the Heathen in many gods. It states also the great essential of Christian theology,—that God is our Father. In face, also, of those modern speculators, who declare that Christ, the Son, is the Maker of the worlds, it proclaims that God, the Father, made this earth and heaven.

It continues, "And I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord," whose life and death are then briefly narrated. In the severe condensation of this narration is, I think, the greatest deficiency of this creed. I conceive that any man can assent to its statements, who believes, in general, that Jesus Christ was sent to be the Saviour of the world, and believes the substantial truth of the narrative of the four Gospels. As I said last Sunday, the clause, "He descended

into hell," is admitted to be modern in comparison with the remainder of the creed. There is no Scripture which, in any sense, sustains it. It is not, therefore, always read in the creed ; and is the one article which is not a point of union. Those Protestant churches, therefore, which read it, generally explain it away. Thus the Westminster Confession says, "He descended into hell ;" that is, "continued in the state of the dead." Now, in other places, the same confession says, that, at death, the souls of the righteous ascend immediately into the highest heaven ; and, as Jesus was certainly one of the righteous, it appears that, in the use of this article by a Presbyterian confessor, the words, "He descended into hell," mean, "He ascended into the highest heaven." It is more manly to omit a clause than thus to explain it away.

The statement of the creed, regarding the Holy Spirit, is simply, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." The Christian does not merely believe, as the Epicurean does, that God made the world, and then let it alone. He believes that God is in the world now ; that he governs its motions now. Law is only the name of the methods of his action there. And God comes to every heart now, to direct and inspirit now. Conscience is only the name of the method of his action here. To express this belief, the Christian says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

These are the fundamentals of the creed. Thus does it speak of man's relations to Christ, of Christ's to God, and of man's to God. But the creed goes farther. For the Christian's love for Jesus Christ, and his resolve to follow him, are not a lonely passion and determination : they make an enthusiasm which ties him to all other men who love Jesus and follow him. That unseen union of them all is expressed by the words, "I believe in the holy catholic church," and "the communion of saints."

Again : the Christian's certainty that sin makes no impassable barrier between him and God is expressed in the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

His certainty of immortality must be expressed also. And so, in face of the old Pantheistic theory of the East, that, at death, we are absorbed into God, and lose our own consciousness ; that we are blocks of ice, floating in the ocean of eternity, into which ocean we melt back again, — the Christian expresses the other certainty, that he shall possess a separate conscious existence. He shall have, in heaven, some sort of body of his own. Not, of course, that earthly body which he has here : the great Christian scripture of Paul excludes that notion ; so that it is strange that any section of the church ever tried for it. But *some* body, such as Paul, in paradox, calls a spiritual body, will belong to the soul in its resurrection.

And, lastly, this resurrection is for *eternal* life. The Father is eternal ; therefore the children are. And thus the child, who, because he is child, and not creature, can begin his confession by saying, “I believe in God, the Father Almighty,” can end it by saying, “I believe in the resurrection of the body and in life everlasting.”

Around a centre in which these facts are embodied, revolve, in different orbits, the various systems of the Christian Church, — its different worlds and their satellites. In each system, however small, the Christian life shows itself in two forms. It exhibits itself thus in each congregation ; nay, in the two or three gathered together, which is the smallest possible separate church. In any two lives, it shows itself in two forms. As, in a compass-needle, the northern electricity and the southern take the two ends of the needle, however short ; nay, as the smallest atom of magnetized iron has its north pole and its south : so the least organization of Christian believers has its two poles of the divine life. They get different names in different bodies ; often they have no names : but, wherever any congregation of Christians is alive, these distinct methods of life appear. The names are not generally successful ; the people to whom they are given seldom like

them : but the distinction between the poles is always observable, even in the smallest meeting of those who most nearly agree. They say, that the day after Sir Humphry Davy had exhibited, for the first time, the magnetic spark as the result of an immense battery, which, with that object, the English Government had built for him, Dr. Wollaston stopped a friend in the street, and showed him there the same experiment with a little battery, which he had made in a lady's thimble. Just in that way, the great divisions of the church of Christ, which history celebrates and at which theologians are amazed, result from diversities of human character, which you may see when only three persons are sitting together in accidental intercourse, if the conversation turns, simply and truly, upon religion.

When these diversities of the lives of separate Christians exhibit themselves on the largest scale, we see the two great opposed systems of doctrine which divide the world. We close our survey of the developments of doctrine by contrasting these two systems.

At one pole of opinion, they think that the original plan of this world failed ; that, by the fall of the first man, the original scheme was vitiated so far, that a new scheme was necessary to recover from a wrecked world some fragments of the human family.\*

The opposite pole of opinion holds, that, in the general design of the world, there has never been any failure ; that, on the whole, the course of the world, under God's different revelations of himself, has been steady improvement ; that, indeed, God's system of government always shows advance from lower grades of life to higher ; and that he sent his Son, at last, not to rescue from a wreck a little company of his children, but to communicate to the whole world, to all the children, chance of higher life than they had before.

\* I refer the careful student of this view to a sermon on this subject by my friend Rev. David A. Wasson, — “The Universe no Failure.”

The first pole of opinion, in consequence of its theory of shipwreck, holds to very accurate descriptions of those who are saved. It classifies them. It even writes down their names. It defines their opinions; and, in the phrases of this set of systems, those who are on the raft of safety, while the great body of their brethren gasp vainly and go down, are the elect of God.\*

The opposite opinion, regarding Christ as the minister of new life to a whole world, supposes that everybody gets some of that life, even unconsciously. We know no limit to the radiation of the Star of Bethlehem. Wherever any filament of human life, even in commerce, in education, or in government, connects any human being with the great manifestation of God made in Galilee and Jerusalem, we believe that that human being begins to get the advantage which, in Christ, God offered to the world. From the savage, who first uses a tool which is the invention of Christian civilization, up to the Florence Nightingale, whom Christ sends to carry the life of Christ to the wounded and dying, we believe the work of the atonement may be traced in every life. In such infinite variety of operations, we find it impossible to classify or to define. Blessed are they who are closest to him who brings the life, — blessed they; for they gain most of it. But it is not for us to say who gains just enough, or who gains none. Christ came to every living man; and, whoever gains any blessed influence from him, let him gain more.

True to the first theory, which I have called the theory of shipwreck, the schools which hold to it suppose, at the end of mortal life, an examination of all who die. They closely restrict those texts which speak of the inevitable judgment passed upon all men; and this judgment becomes simply a judicial inquiry as to the way in which they conducted themselves here. Human life is, therefore, with those believers,

\* Compare the tract, "The Life Preserver," No. 431, vol. xiii., in the American Tract Society's series.

a scene of trial or probation ; at the end of which, some are accepted as coming up to the standards, while all the rest are thrown by.

True, on the other hand, to the other theory, that God lifted up the whole world when he revealed himself, we of the Liberal schools conceive this world as a place of education. It is not mere trial or probation : it is rather training and elevation. Wherever we leave it, there we go on. And the judgment is not an external decision, which cuts us into two bodies,—the lost and the saved : it is the immediate and self-wrought consequence to every man of the powers he has gained, or the sins by which he is enslaved. The world is not a drill-yard, from which recruits are to be selected, if they be tall enough and strong enough for the household troops of the great Sovereign : it is rather the great family school, in which he trains all his children in the accents, the habits, and the duties of life beyond. Those who profit most by its training will be able there to go on most rapidly, and with the more advanced studies and offices of their new career.

Both systems of opinion acknowledge the present work of God, or the Holy Spirit. But the system which believes in a historical fall, really disbelieving man's ability, gets forced into statements which make the work of the Holy Spirit seem external, arbitrary, and mechanical. It picks out the elect as you might separate sound fruit from rotten, the fruit all unconscious.

The other system, which does not believe in the fixed and determinate evil of human nature, holding to its capacity for improvement always, and to the identity of its essence with the nature of God himself, expresses the work of the Holy Spirit as an interfusion of the life of God with the life of man. It is not an arbitrary lifting from without : it is a swelling of the pulses of life within. The Spirit does not lift up the soul, as you lift a child in your arms, that it may be as tall as a man : it quickens the soul, that it may grow, and

that, by this divine blessing, the child may become a man. It does not single out one live wheat-grain from the rest, and, without its effort, lay it away ; it does not lift such selected wheat-grains by any ingenious machinery, as a man lifts his corn at harvest-time, by an elevator, to the room in his warehouse which it is fit for : it stimulates the life which is latent in the grain, and feeds it with moisture, and feeds it with air, that it may gain more life and more, and that it may grow itself to bring forth thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold.

I say, there appears this difference in the language of the two schools. But, on this point, I do not think they are, in fact, so far apart as their zealous disputants make them appear.

But this habit of language necessarily drives the sterner leaders of the shipwreck hypothesis into statements of the work of redemption, which can be made wholly outside of the place of man in it. Gradually, but certainly, man is removed further away. At last, they begin to talk of the redemption of man as a drama in which he is not even a near spectator. As the statements become more philosophical, an offended God satisfies the justice of a just God by uniting himself with a human form. In this form he can suffer and die, and does so. He sacrifices himself, that this just God may show he is a merciful God, and that, without offence, he may come as the Holy Spirit to save those souls which else are lost. This great drama is performed to satisfy the host of the angels, who else would charge a merciful God with injustice ; and, as they look on, man also beholds the scene, but it is all outside of him.

The other school of opinion holds neither views nor language which keep God away from the soul of man. It regards God as always watching and interpenetrating and blessing every soul, even of the darkest savage, or, what is worse, of the meanest child of civilization. It therefore makes all its statements of atonement and redemption centre in the work which is wrought on these several souls. A Saviour who goes about doing good does it for these starving

souls. A Saviour who weeps consecrates their sorrow. A Saviour who dies, dies to bring them to God. A Saviour rising from the dead lifts them to a new life.

And here, I suppose, is the centre of the distinction between us and high Orthodoxy. We believe the work of the atonement was wrought upon men. Calvin certainly regarded it as wrought upon God. Of his admirers in our day, those who partially dissent from him look on it as wrought for the satisfaction of the angelic host.

At this point, both in the history of the church and in the smaller history of each generation and each man, comes in the separation between the two poles as to the person of Christ. If the whole world is radically turned from God, every heart hermetically sealed against him; if the work of man's redemption is to be wrought outside of man, and to be the satisfaction of an infinite God, who is justly offended with this defiant race,—he who works that work must be, they say, the equal of that God. Can we not, then, in some way, make Christ this equal? Can we not make him God, as well as the Father he is to satisfy. Here is it, that, in history or in any heart, Trinitarianism is born.

We, on the other hand, to whom the words, "I believe in God, the Father," really mean, God is my Father, and I am his child,—in our belief that his Spirit ranges at will through every heart, and that no sin is obstacle enough to keep him out,—we never feel this necessity of lifting Christ to be equal with God. We, therefore, never develop that doctrine from the Gospels. It is confessed on all sides, that, without development, it is not found there. We believe that he is the Son of God, and our Lord. True, in the same sense in which we say the true church is one with God, we can say that Christ is one with God; but we do not say he is God, or the equal of God. And, finding no necessity to describe his nature, we, who cannot describe our own,—we are satisfied to call him, what the creed calls him, "Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord."

From a radical difference as to human nature, there thus works its way into history and into separate belief a difference as to the nature of the Saviour. It comes late into theology ; four centuries, as we have seen, having passed before the Orthodox view got "developed" from the Scripture so far as to be defined. It is not the original difference between the two schools, but is rather a subordinate difference which comes in in the unfolding of the two.

It is not fair to say that either of these great systems is merely the negation of the other. They are based on two different principles : they differ, therefore, at the very start, from each other ; but each has its positive elements, clear to all but bigot eyes. Neither of them is a system of negations. Our system is certainly the system of cheerfulness, energy, action, courage, and positive progress. Let me sum up the grand points around which it crystallizes, and I have done.

1. "We believe in God, the Father ;" meaning God our Father, not simply the Father of Jesus Christ. We believe that every attribute of fatherly love exists in him, in its infinite perfection ; and to us, therefore, every system is certainly wrong where any thing militates against his mercy unlimited, his love unbound.

2. We equally believe, that, literally and completely, we are all his children ; partakers of the divine nature, whenever we choose ; and, whether we choose or no, made in his image. We cannot help the divinity that makes us live. We are immortal ; we are God-born ; and, so far, infinite beings. There is no point in advance of us too high for our aim.

3. We believe that this world was made by our Father as a school for his children. We use it as he means, when we train ourselves in the divine life as he has revealed it to us. This world is the best school for this training. It is not a bower of roses ; because that would not be the best school. Nor is it a valley of horrors ; for a perfect Father made it for his children. It is the best place he knew how to arrange

for our training in faith, hope, and love ; which is to say, in life eternal.

4. As that Father watched this school, as he led the world along in its gradual development, he was preparing always for the moment when its life might be enlarged. At that moment, he sent the well-beloved Son into it, who brings to it the divine life ; and all who come to him catch sparks from him of that electric fire.

5. Whoever catches any thing of this life from the Lord Jesus Christ will gain more of it from the living presence of God, here and now, than he ever had before. This is what one gains from the present Holy Spirit. So inspirited, he will gain more again from the Lord Jesus ; and then, in turn, yet more from the Spirit of truth. Thus the true child is constantly gaining “life more abundantly.” If he gets any of the divine life, he may gain more, and he must gain more. This is the test of the true life. An essential feature of it is advance from faith to faith, from hope to hope ; yes, from glory to glory.

Thus recognizing the constant affiliation of the immortal children with their infinite Father, and his constant care of them, it is impossible for us to regard death as the critical central transaction which it is in the other theology. It is the exchange of a material body for a spiritual body ; but it is not the radical change of the child of God who passes through it. He is God’s child, as he was God’s child. God did take care of him : God does take care of him. The kingdom of Heaven was at hand to him before this change of the tool he uses. It is at hand in the new body which he uses in the new world. It is impossible for us to look at the moment of that change as the special moment for which we are to direct our plans, or offer our prayers. We begin literally, here, the life which is to be enlarging, and therefore changing, in one way and another, through all time, for ever.

To such practical guides of life does our theology enlarge the symbols which say, “I believe in God, the Father ; and in

his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord ; I believe in the Holy Ghost ; and I believe in life everlasting.” Charge them full with meaning, and let this meaning show itself in life, and they save the church from its only danger ; that is, the danger of going to sleep or of standing still.

For the church is lost, when it deals with men as if they were only creatures of this world. Leave that to the Epicureans, to the sensualists, to the materialists. Let a Christian church deal with men as immortal. It believes in life everlasting.

The church fails again, when, in its philosophizing, it forgets either side of that threefold work of God from which it is born. It believes in God, the Father, who made heaven and earth ; and in his only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord : but if it so believe in them as to shut out the present Holy Spirit, informing us, uplifting us, and enlivening us, here and now, it falls asleep, and almost dies. So sank the church of England in the beginning of the last century. Or the church may believe, as American Orthodoxy believes, in his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and in the Holy Spirit : but if it so believe these as to suppose that God is not *our* Father, or that he did not really make for us this world on which we tread ; if it suppose that Jesus is so far God, that the Father becomes a “distant, cold, impalpable effluence,” — it stumbles into the pit where American Orthodoxy is now groping. From that pit it will emerge only when it sees that a loving Father made all things, and that, therefore, all are very good. Or perhaps the church proclaims God, the Father, only ; and has no great care for the new life sent by his Son, and no sense of his present whisper in the Spirit. Then it stumbles where the English Deists stumbled, and their friends the English Unitarians of the last century. Then it needs to feel the present God as well as the God who stretched out the heavens and the seas ; and it needs to catch enlivenment from that life of Christ, in which, in human effort, God had manifested himself as he had before in the things that he had made.

The church advances to its victory, only when it recognizes, severally, all three of the works of God,—the work of creation, the work of redemption, and the present work of his present Spirit. The church is weak, and it falls, when it proclaims only one or two of these, or when it makes one out of all three together. As its victory grows more imposing; as it ties sin with tighter cords, and holds it back more assuredly,—the more certainly will it see the threefold sources of the fountains of its life; the more surely will it avoid the robbery of balancing the one of these against the other, or of trying to absorb the one by the other. Its statement of creed will come back to the shortest: “I believe in God, the Father; and in Jesus Christ, his Son; and in the Holy Spirit.” And, for its paean of triumph, it will not turn into one shrine or another or another, as if God could be jealous of his Son, or as if Jesus could be jealous of his Father; but in the great open temple of his love, when that day of victory comes, not sinking into any monotone of unison, it will pour forth its praises in the triple chord of harmony,—

“ Glory be to the Father,  
AND to the Son,  
AND to the Holy Ghost,

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.*  
Amen.”



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